

Please add the following claims:

B2 --10. The method of claim 1, wherein the k_a is at least 0.1 sec^{-1} .

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the k_a is at least 0.4 sec^{-1} .--

REMARKS

The Applicants have amended claim 1, cancelled claim 9, and added claims 10 and 11.

\$112, First Paragraph Rejection

The Office Action rejected claim 9 under 35 USC \$112, first paragraph. Claim 9 has been cancelled. Accordingly, it is believed that this rejection is now moot.

\$112, second paragraph rejection

The Office Action rejected claims 1-6 and 9 under 35 USC \$112, second paragraph on the basis of objection to the term "about" in claim 1. Claim 1 has been amended to remove this term. As such, Applicants believe that this rejection is overcome.

\$ 103 Rejection

Claims 1-6 and 9 were rejected under 35 USC \$103(a) as being unpatentable over Coutts in view of Ripka.

Claim 1 has now been amended to recite that the yeast slurry of step (a) is provided from a previous fermentation in which the yeast has experienced anaerobic conditions, that the yeast slurry is oxygenated prior to pitching the yeast in a subsequent fermentation, and that the oxygenation occurs under conditions such that the $k_L a$ is at least 0.005 sec^{-1} . Neither Coutts nor Ripka disclose or suggest these claimed limitations. As such, it is believed that the §103 rejection is overcome.

Conclusion

In view of the amendments to the claims, and the Remarks being submitted herewith, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the present application.

The Applicants wish to invite the Examiner to telephone the Applicants' attorney at the number listed below if discussion with the Applicants' attorney would be of assistance to the Examiner or further the prosecution of the present application.

Applicants hereby petition to extend the period for response two months from November 28, 2001 to January 28, 2002. A fee transmittal sheet is enclosed for payment of the two month extension fee. If any other fees are

deemed necessary, please charge such fees to Deposit
Account 17-0055.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

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VERSION OF CLAIMS SHOWING CHANGES

1. (Twice Amended) A method of oxygenating yeast slurry from a previous fermentation comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a yeast slurry from a previous fermentation having [about] 40 g/l yeast to [about] 80 g/l yeast on a dry weight basis, wherein the yeast experienced anaerobic conditions in the previous fermentation;

(b) prior to pitching the yeast in a subsequent fermentation, passing at least a portion of the yeast slurry through a membrane contactor, the contactor comprising at least one hydrophobic, microporous membrane, the membrane having a liquid side and a gas side, wherein the contactor is connected to an oxygen source, and wherein at least a portion of the yeast slurry is in proximity to the membrane on the liquid side;

(c) delivering oxygen from the oxygen source to the gas side of the membrane under conditions that cause at least a portion of the oxygen to transfer from the gas side of the membrane to the yeast slurry such that the $k_L a$ is at least 0.005 sec^{-1} .

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for admission